

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL HOUSING MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF NEWCASTLE WEST HELD IN ÁRAS WILLIAM SMITH OBRIEN, NEWCASTLE WEST, CO. LIMERICK, ON TUESDAY, 20TH MARCH, 2018, AT 10AM.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR: Councillor M. Collins, Cathaoirleach.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Browne, Foley, Sheahan, Scanlan and Galvin.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Director, Service Operations (Mr. G. Daly), Meetings Administrator, Newcastle West (Ms. M. Corbett), A/Senior Engineer Service Operations (Housing) (Mr. R. Gallagher), Administrative Officer, Service Operations (Mr. Rob Lowth), Executive Engineer Service Operations (Mr. J. Rigney).

The Members referred to storage heating in Local Authority houses and the cost to tenants of same. They stated that some tenants wished to have this type of heating system replaced and funding should be sought to assist with these requests. The replacement of wood pellet stoves in some houses was also noted. Insulation works to local authority houses was also discussed along with the new SEAI scheme for deep retrofitting of houses.

Discussion also took place on grants for private houses, in particular the terms and conditions of Housing Aid for Older People Scheme.

The different sections within the Council for Housing Assessments, Allocations, and Maintenance Services was a cause of major concern for Members as they stated that the County areas were not given adequate attention. It was queried if these services could be provided by the Municipal District Offices.

Discussion also took place on routine maintenance and the procedure for bringing long term vacant properties back into stock available for letting. It was noted that in some cases vacant property took a long time to become available for letting and it was stated that Council stock should be up to the same letting standards as private housing. Anti social behaviour was also raised.

In response, the A/Senior Engineer, stated that the funding was a consideration with regard to the replacement of storage heating. The Administrative Officer advised that it could cost between €7,000 to €12,000 to replace heating systems.

It was acknowledged that the budget provided for housing maintenance was predominately a reactive budget and there was a need for a planned maintenance budget. With regard to vacant properties, the A/Senior Engineer advised that local authority housing is also subject to housing standards and vacant properties need to be brought to these standards prior to letting. In some cases, houses may be in poor condition and therefore it took time to get these properties ready for reletting. The Executive Engineer referred to some houses in Abbeyfeale, which are currently being upgraded for new tenants.

The Director stated that housing was a challenging area and the items raised by Members highlighted their concerns. He noted that the Council currently has 5,300 houses in its stock. He stated that the Council was purchasing houses under the Buy and Renew Scheme and therefore houses purchased are in need of upgrade works prior to letting. He briefly outlined the procurement requirements, which the Council has to adhere to with regard to the engagement of contractors.

As regards having additional housing services available at the Municipal District Offices, he noted that this would be duplication of work. He did note that there are issues with the current system but given the scale of the work involved the system was effective.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed:

Cathaoirleach

Dated:
